

floor and allowing them to be voted on, and then having a conference committee not on a law that is 3 years old, but on a pending item between the House and the Senate: the budget. Sooner or later, the system ought to be allowed to work.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, this shutdown should not have happened. The Framers of our Constitution designed our system to have tension and differences between the two houses of Congress—that's a given. But after the House and Senate have exercised their best judgment, they are then supposed to sit down and negotiate out their differences. This is the way our bicameral system has worked for 225 years. It is the only way that it can work.

That hasn't happened this time. This time the House proposed a compromise nearly 2 weeks ago to keep the government open and to defund ObamaCare in order to address the epidemic of dropped health care policies, massive rate increases, and job cutbacks that we're now seeing as a result of its implementation. The Senate rejected that compromise by insisting on full funding with no reform. That is their prerogative. It represents the best judgment of that body.

At that point, the differences were supposed to have been negotiated. They weren't. The Senate's leaders refused even to discuss a compromise. So the House offered the second compromise of funding the entire government, including ObamaCare, but at least delaying its implementation for a year to address the rapidly growing complaints that we are all receiving. Instead of taking up the measure, the Senate instead chose to take the weekend off, come in at the leisurely hour of 2:00 in the afternoon on the day of the fiscal deadline, and then summarily reject the House offer, again refusing even to discuss a compromise.

With the clock running out, the House offered a third compromise: fund the entire government, fund ObamaCare, including the malfunctioning exchanges, but at least delay the mandate for individuals to obtain coverage for a year while these problems are addressed and rescind the illegal action of the President that shields Members of Congress from the costs of this law. It's a simple principle: equality under law.

Since the President has already exempted Big Business from the mandate to provide health care for employees, then those employees should also be relieved from the mandate to purchase it. And if Members of Congress can't afford the new costs of ObamaCare, how do we expect the average American to do so? Once again, the Senate summarily rejected the third compromise

by the House and once again refused even to discuss our differences. The clock ran out, and the government is now in a partial shutdown.

Ironically, House Republicans have been accused of a "my way or the highway" approach, yet the record is quite the opposite. House Republicans compromised and compromised and compromised, only to be met by absolute intransigence at the door of the Senate.

The House has now asked for a formal conference committee. This is the mechanism that has evolved over centuries to resolve even the most intractable differences between the two Houses. Yet once again, Senate leaders summarily rejected the offer even before it was formally made.

The only explanation for this conduct is that Senate leaders believe that a government shutdown inures to their political benefit because they can blame Republicans. If Mr. REID and his followers didn't want a shutdown, they would have been feverishly working through this weekend to avoid one as the House was doing. The fact is they didn't, and that speaks volumes.

Our system of governance was not designed to operate in this manner. It cannot operate in this manner. The essence of a bicameral legislature is for each House to act according to its best judgment, isolate the differences, and then work them out. This is the critical link in our deliberative process, and it is not happening. It's not because of any failure of design, but rather because of designing men.

In his 1862 address to the Congress, Abraham Lincoln set the only course that is open to us. He said, "We can succeed only by concert." It is not "Can any of us imagine better?" but "Can we all do better?" The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to this stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the Senate to set aside its dogmas, rise with the occasion, and accept the invitation of the House to sit down in conference. Let us reason together, and then let us save our country.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. BERA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERA of California. Mr. Speaker, last night, just after midnight, you allowed the government to shut down.

Enough with the gimmicks. I'm not up here to play the blame game, to blame Republicans, to blame the President, to blame the Senate, to blame Democrats. That isn't what the American people want to hear. They want us to do our work. They want us to come together.

Mr. Speaker, we need leadership at this juncture. You're the Speaker of

the House, and this is a House that has both Democrats in it and Republicans. We need your leadership at this moment to open the government and serve the American people. That's what they want to see.

Mr. Speaker, you must be willing to work with Democrats in this body. We are ready and waiting to work with you. My office is open. I'm a doctor, and I'm happy to work with you on the Affordable Care Act and make this about taking care of patients, make this about the American people. We stand ready to do the country's work, but we need your leadership and your willingness to work with Democrats.

The Senate has passed a bill that will keep the government open. Bring it to the floor. If the Republicans don't like it, they'll vote against it. But bring it to the floor and give us a chance to vote up or down. That's how government should work. Give us a chance, as a full body, to vote up or down. We're here to work with you, Mr. Speaker, but bring that clean bill to the floor. Don't attach gimmicks to it.

Keeping government open isn't about attaching a gimmick like access to birth control pills. That isn't what this is about. Stop attaching gimmicks. We are ready to work with you to strengthen and fix the Affordable Care Act and make it about the American patient, but this is about keeping government open. Do your job, Mr. Speaker. We need your leadership.

We've got to stop playing the blame game. This is surreal right now. This is not an episode of "The West Wing." This is real life. In fact, I'm going to read a letter from two constituents of mine, Matthew and Michelle. This is the real world.

Representative BERA, I realize you're not the cause of the looming shutdown, but I'm begging you to do everything you can in your power to keep the shutdown from happening. My wedding is literally going to be ruined if the shutdown happens as we are to marry in Glacier National Park on October 13 . . . It is messing up so many people's lives . . . because some elected people in Washington can't compromise.

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Here's what Matthew wrote:

The constant bickering and self-interest rather than the interests of the general public seem to be a common focus for many in Congress. Start working together and getting things done.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the time for bickering. We need to step up and do our job for all the Matthews and Michelles in America. They're watching, and they're the ones who are suffering. We need to put their interests ahead of political parties, ahead of individual interests.

We got elected to do a job and put the people's interests first. "We, the people." This is the United States of America. We have to start working together in a united way. Mr. Speaker, let's do our work. We stand ready to work and reopen the government. Bring the bill to the floor.